



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

JUL - 7 2016

OFFICE OF WATER

The Honorable Kathleen M. Rice
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congresswoman Rice:

Thank you for your June 6, 2016, letter regarding lifetime drinking water Health Advisories for perfluorooctanoic acid and the need for a national primary drinking water standard for PFOA. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is committed to supporting drinking water system operators, and state, tribal and local officials who have the primary responsibility for overseeing these systems, with information on the health risks of these chemicals, so they can take the appropriate actions to protect their residents.

The EPA's Health Advisories for PFOA and perfluorooctane sulfonate are based on the best available peer-reviewed studies of the effects of PFOA and PFOS on laboratory animals (rats and mice) and were also informed by epidemiological studies of human populations that have been exposed to perfluoroalkyl substances (the group of chemicals of which PFOA and PFOS are a part). The agency's Health Advisory levels were calculated to offer a margin of protection against adverse health effects to the most sensitive populations: fetuses during pregnancy and breastfed infants.

The agency is currently evaluating PFOA and PFOS as drinking water contaminants in accordance with the process required by the Safe Drinking Water Act. As you noted in your letter, to regulate a contaminant under the SDWA, the EPA must find that: (1) it may have adverse health effects; (2) it occurs frequently (or there is a substantial likelihood that it occurs frequently) at levels of public health concern; and (3) there is a meaningful opportunity for health risk reduction for people served by public water systems.

The agency included PFOA and PFOS among the contaminants for which water systems are required to monitor under the third Unregulated Contaminant Monitoring Rule, finalized in 2012. Results of this monitoring reported to date indicate that approximately one percent of the systems have reported levels of PFOA and PFOS at levels greater than EPA's Health Advisory. In accordance with the SDWA, the agency will consider the occurrence data from UCMR 3, along with the peer reviewed health effects assessments supporting the PFOA and PFOS Health Advisories, to make a regulatory determination on whether to initiate the process to develop a national primary drinking water regulation.

In addition, the agency will continue to assess the health science on these contaminants. The agency plans to begin a separate effort to determine the range of perfluoroalkyl substances for which an Integrated Risk Information System assessment is needed. The IRIS program identifies and characterizes the health hazards of chemicals found in the environment. IRIS assessments inform the first two steps of the risk assessment process: hazard identification and dose-response.

Again, thank you for your letter. If you have further questions, please contact me or your staff may contact Cathy Davis in the EPA's Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Relations at Davis.CatherineM@epa.gov or (202) 564-2703.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Joel Beauvais", with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Joel Beauvais
Deputy Assistant Administrator